

# City, County Agree to Open Chicago Street

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JOLIET, IL - Officials from the Will County Executive, Will County Board and the City of [Joliet](#) have announced that after years of being closed between Washington and Jefferson streets, Chicago Street will open to the public as part of a larger property exchange between the county and city. The agreement will benefit Joliet's downtown redevelopment plans, the county, and the general public.

"Every downtown development plan the city has invested in indicates that reconnecting Chicago Street is key to revitalize downtown Joliet," said Joliet Mayor Bob O'Dekirk. "The city has talked about this for years, but took no action to make it happen. I am thrilled that we have worked out this deal and can announce that reconnecting Chicago Street and building the city center square is no longer just an idea, it will be a reality. Thanks to our staff, councilman John Gerl, and our good friends at Will County for once again coming together to improve our great city."

As part of the negotiations, Will County has agreed to trade property with Joliet that will allow Chicago Street to open between Washington and Jefferson streets. Joliet will also receive Van Buren Plaza, where the former State's Attorney building now sits across from the historic Rialto Square Theater, on which to build a public square.

"Joliet is Will County's county seat, and a large majority of county facilities are located within downtown Joliet," said County Executive Larry Walsh. "I have always advocated to keep a strong county presence in the downtown city center, and I am very happy after many years of negotiations we were able to reach a deal that works for all the parties involved. This should lead to forward progress on many fronts for our region."

"Joliet has been growing rapidly in the past few years, and we're glad we could work with Mayor O'Dekirk and Joliet officials to further their development efforts," said Will County Board Speaker Jim Moustis (R-Frankfort). "The collaboration between the county and city government, and the resulting deal, will benefit both Joliet and Will County residents."

In exchange for the Chicago Street and civic center properties, Joliet will transfer the former Metra parking lot, which is adjacent to the courthouse parking lot, to Will County. Officials have said the parking lot will be resurfaced, redesigned, and automated. The makeover will increase the number of available parking spaces from 166 to more than 200. Parking in the lot will also be available to the public for events after 4p.m. for free.

The Redevelopment Plan for downtown Joliet was completed last year. Opening up Chicago Street will allow visitors attending the Rialto Theatre and other city events to drive directly into the corridor area where these events are hosted. To aid in its redevelopment, Joliet recently received a [Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning](#) (CMAP) grant of \$86,000 for the redesign and landscaping of Chicago Street. The City also contributed an additional \$40,000 to that planning grant for the design of the expanded plaza.

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